# The Struggle for Sewer in Lehi
# By Richard Van Wagoner

The most important accomplishment of Mayor Sharp's administration was the completion of a city-wide sewer system. Disposal of human waste materials in a noxious but necessary demand on city government. The first consideration of a sewer system in Lehi was during the post-World War II administration of Mayor Dean Prior. During an April 15, 1946 city council meeting, city engineering consultant Dr. T. C. Adams proposed a city-wide sewer disposal system. The plan was further pursued in another council meeting in September, when financial plans were submitted and approved. The city proposed issuing $50,000 of obligation bonds, and $125,000 worth of revenue bonds.

City leaders were enthusiastic about the benefits of a modern sewer system. "Proper sewage disposal not only provides health protection," Mayor Prior pointed out during an August 12, 1947 round table discussion, "but ensures and promotes civic values as well." The specific advantages pointed out to citizens included health and sanitation improvement, including reduction of polio, enhancing the city's growth; elimination of odors and stench; and an increase in property values.

In the fall of 1947 city representatives began a house-to house approach to arrange sewer contracts with citizens. Households could subscribe under one of the four following plans:

1-$300 cash payment

2-$100 down payment and two $100 monthly payments

3-$75 down payment and two successive monthly payment of $50 each.

4-$50 down payment and two successive monthly payments of $15 each.

If one of the latter two methods were contracted, the unpaid balance was to be paid from the revenue bonds and billed to the home on a monthly basis of $1.50 per month. Those who subscribed to one of the sewer plans received a patriotic red, white and blue window sticker which read: " I Have Subscribed to the Lehi Sewer". Two large barometers were placed on Main and State Streets to keep

residents apprised of the status of the $50,000 goal.

On December 17, 1947, bids on the project were opened. the lowest submission exceeded engineer Adams' estimate by $46,435.04. After considering several options, all of which would have increased both connection and monthly fees, the sewer plans were abandoned and all deposits refunded.

The sewer issue was again raised during the summer of 1954 after Mayor Sharp had assumed his position. City physician Dr. Elmo Eddington was a driving force behind the successful effort. "If Lehi hopes to save its face as a respectable place in the State of Utah," he argued, "if we who live here have any conscience about the type of sanitary surrounding we live in, if we have any hope of developing a community which invites new people, new homes, and new industry, we had better get that sewer no matter what it costs."

Engineer Alton B. Sorenson, during a May 9, 1955 city council meeting, estimated that the installation of the sewer lines and treatment plant would cost $700,000, more than double the projected costs of the 1947 system. Lauren W. Gibbs, city fiscal agent, recommended that the city obtain a $175,000 general obligation bond for constructing the treatment plant, and a revenue bond, to be repaid from monthly service charges, for the balance of the system's cost. The city council voted not only to pursue this proposal but also to bond for an additional $90,000 to repair the city streets after the installation of the sewer lines. The sewer bond and ordinance was overwhelmingly approved, with only a 6.8 percent dissenting vote.

Winning bidders on the disposal plant were the Davis and Butler Company ($191,395), and Redferd and Kendsen on the collection system ($381,288.74). Thomas F. Kirkham was appointed financial manager of the system, and Douglas Willes was designated superintendent of the newly combined Water and Sewer Departments.

The sewage disposal plant was constructed on a four-acre site south of town

near the lake. Acement filter tank, ninety feet in diameter, was filled to the seven-foot level with two thousand tons of two-and-one half to three-inch filter rock. Immediately south of the filter tank were the primary and secondary clarifier tanks-each thirty feet in diameter. Nearby was the control building, where grinding and pumping operations were carried out.

After the sewer system was completed in June 1957, the disposal plant operated automatically. Sludge from the clarifiers was pumped to the digester tank where it was heated to 94 degrees to stimulate the action of bacteria in breaking down the sludge. This action was continuous with the "dead" sludge being pumped out to the open sludge beds, or drying fields, periodically. Water from the secondary clarifier tank, 85 percent pure was pumped into an open ditch which emptied into Utah Lake until the plant was closed in 1979.

The city's streets, many still dirt, were modernized in 1957 after the sewer system was completed. More than sixty-thousand tons of gravel were used in the $115,000 project.